

Georgia Department of Human Resources

**OFFICE OF THE STATE LONG-TERM
CARE OMBUDSMAN**

“Ombudsman” is a Swedish word meaning “citizen representative.” A Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) is a specialized ombudsman who works to resolve problems of and advocates for long-term care facility residents. In Georgia, the long-term care facilities include nursing homes, personal care homes (often called assisted living facilities), and community living arrangements.

The Office of the State LTCO contracts with community programs affiliated with Area Agencies on Aging. Approximately 50 certified LTCOs in Georgia – both staff and volunteers – are available to help residents. LTCOs complete extensive training to become authorized to resolve complaints. Some volunteers regularly visit residents and assist in other ways. Long-term care services, the physical environment, residents’ rights, and discharges are among the many concerns ombudsmen address on behalf of residents.

Ombudsmen:

- Investigate and work to resolve problems or complaints affecting residents.
- Identify problem areas and advocate for change.
- Provide information, including advice to wisely select a facility.
- Promote resident, family and community involvement.
- Educate the community about the needs of residents.
- Coordinate efforts with others concerned with long-term care.
- Visit facilities routinely to talk to residents and monitor conditions.
- Educate facility staff about resident rights and other issues.

The SFY 2003 budget was \$2,652,634 (\$1,199,896 federal, \$1,137,050 state, and \$315,688 local).

In SFY 2003, LTCOs served 3,905 individuals through complaint investigation. LTCOs handled 6,576 complaints for nursing home residents and 1,723 for residents of personal care homes. Thirty percent of complaints involved resident care; 29 percent, resident rights; 24 percent, quality of life issues; 10 percent, administration; and 6 percent, outside agency concerns.

In SFY 2003, community ombudsmen and AARP sponsored training events across Georgia to assist certified nurse assistants in nursing homes to enhance their work as part of a care-giving team. LTCOs participated in a recognition of best practices in personal care homes, an event sponsored by the Office of Regulatory Services and the personal care home trade associations. Ombudsmen distributed program brochures in Spanish and Resident’s Right materials in Spanish, Braille, and on audiotape. They also successfully advocated for a new law requiring licensure and minimum quality standards for day care centers serving elders. For more information, contact your community program or the Office of the State LTCO at 888-454-LTCO (5826).